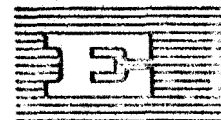


UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC
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GENERAL

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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
SUB-COMMISSION ON FREEDOM OF INFORMATION AND OF THE PRESS
Fifth Session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE NINETY-SECOND MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Thursday, 6 March 1952, at 3 p.m.

CONTENTS:

Draft international code of ethics (E/CN.4/Sub.1/151,
E/CN.4/Sub.1/151/Add.1, E/CN.4/Sub.1/160, E/CN.4/Sub.1/L.1,
E/CN.4/Sub.1/L.2/Rev.1, E/CN.4/Sub.1/L.3, E/CN.4/Sub.1/L.3/Corr.1,
E/CN.4/Sub.1/L.4)(continued)

<u>Chairman:</u>	AZMI Bey	(Egypt)
<u>Rapporteur:</u>	Mr. AZKOUL	(Lebanon)
<u>Members:</u>	Mr. BINDER	(United States of America)
	Mr. P. H. CHANG	(China)
	Mr. GERAUD	(France)
	Mr. LOPEZ	(Philippines)
	Mr. MOULIK	(India)
	Mr. PLEIC	(Yugoslavia)
	Mr. SILVA CARVALLO	(Chile)
	Mr. WAITHMAN	(United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)
	Mr. ZONOV	(Union of Soviet Socialist Republics)

Representative of a specialized agency:

Mr. CARNES

United Nations Educational, Scientific
and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

Representative of a non-governmental organization:

Category B:

Mr. BEER

International League for the Rights
of Man

Secretariat:

Mr. BEK

Secretary of the Sub-Commission

DRAFT INTERNATIONAL CODE OF ETHICS (E/CN.4/Sub.1/151, E/CN.4/Sub.1/151/Add.1, E/CN.4/Sub.1/160, E/CN.4/Sub.1/L.1, E/CN.4/Sub.1/L.2/Rev.1, E/CN.4/Sub.1/L.3, E/CN.4/Sub.1/L.3/Corr.1, E/CN.4/Sub.1/L.4) (continued)

Mr. MOULIK proposed the insertion of the word "by" before the word "constantly" and of the words "and trust" after the word "responsibility" in the second paragraph of the preamble of the draft code of ethics (E/CN.4/Sub.1/151, page 45). The first amendment was purely stylistic; the second was required because the press, exercising, as it did, enormous power, must accept the responsibility for seeing that that power was not abused.

Mr. LOPEZ would accept Mr. Moulik's second amendment and, if necessary, insert it in his own (E/CN.4/Sub.1/L.4). He could not see any stylistic reason for Mr. Moulik's first amendment; the text was more grammatical as it stood.

In reply to the CHAIRMAN, Mr. CHANG said that he would further study the comments of the information enterprises and professional associations to see which of them he could sponsor personally, in accordance with the Chairman's previous ruling, and submit them to the next meeting. None of them would apply to the preamble.

Mr. AZKOUL would prepare an amendment to the preamble to be submitted at the next meeting. The preamble should include a paragraph, similar to the first paragraph of the preamble of the Charter, placing the code of ethics in its historical context. The preamble as it stood stated that freedom of information /should be

should be safeguarded and it was implied that the press would be less liable to interference from governments if it improved its standards of professional conduct; but that was not sufficient. There should be some statement of the view that the press had become an instrument of such power that the fate of individuals, nations and perhaps even of humanity might be swayed by its misuse and that the realization of that fact had led the United Nations to contemplate drafting an international code of ethics. It was true that it was not incumbent on the press to solve the world's problems, but it should faithfully reflect them. Some reference to that view should be included in the preamble.

Mr. LOPEZ regretted that Mr. Azkoul had not thought fit to submit his amendment earlier.

The CHAIRMAN thought that the debate on the amendments to the preamble had been nearly completed. While awaiting Mr. Moulik's and Mr. Azkoul's amendments, the Sub-Commission might usefully discuss article I. Mr. Zonov had submitted a proposed new article (E/CN.4/Sub.1/160), which might or might not be regarded, for the purposes of voting, as an addition to the preamble; he would make that decision later.

Mr. ZONOV said that he would prefer that the preamble should be voted before his proposed new article. He had already given the gist of the reasons why such an article was needed; it supplied the necessary reference to the purposes and principles of the United Nations. At a previous meeting it had been asserted that his amendment added nothing new; but he laid no claim to originality. He was merely reasserting the fact that it was incumbent upon the journalist to work for the ideals of the United Nations. Everyone should do his utmost to promote friendly relations between peoples and combat discrimination; the workers in the press and information services had a particular responsibility in that respect. The explicit statement of the purposes and principles of the United Nations had been included in the Charter and in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and would no doubt be embodied in the future international covenants on human rights. Surely it would not be out of place in a document such as the international code of ethics. He was not suggesting that any paragraph in the existing text should be deleted.

/Mr. BINDER

Mr. BINDER said that he had described Mr. Zonov's amendment as a rehashing of the same proposals only because it was just one more example of the way in which he and the USSR delegation continually attempted to use the United Nations to spread and enforce their view that the regimented journalist should be an instrument of the state rather than a reporter of events, loyal to the truth as he saw it and to his readers' interests. Mr. Zonov's amendment represented so profound a departure from the democratic concept of journalism that no code incorporating it could be accepted by independent journalists. That did not imply that journalists were not prepared to fight fascism. The Sub-Commission itself had set an example when, meeting at Montevideo in the shadow of a fascist regime which had been viciously persecuting independent newspapers, it had adopted an expression of sympathy with their position and had tried to mobilize public opinion in support of them. Everyone was in favour of peace; but a statement of that view would be out of place in a binding code of ethics which would allow the state to define what constituted a threat to peace. That question had been threshed out over and over again in many United Nations bodies. It was to be hoped that the Sub-Commission would again reject the attempt to impose upon the journalist, as a duty rather than as an ideal, the promotion of activities which were utterly irrelevant to the profession.

Mr. CHANG recalled that the question of the duties of news personnel had been settled at the previous session. He could not agree with Mr. Zonov that the primary duty of such personnel was the promotion of peace; that was the duty of governments. According to Mr. Zonov, when a newspaperman reported aggression by one country against another, the newspaperman and not the country was endangering the peace. He was unable to share that view and would therefore, like Mr. Binder, oppose Mr. Zonov's amendment (E/CN.4/Sub.1/160).

Mr. ZONOV noted that there was a certain sameness about the arguments advanced against USSR proposals in various United Nations bodies. His amendment pursued a worthy purpose, and he could only regret that it had so far met with no support.

/There was

There was no proof for the absurd and oft-repeated contention that the press in his country was regimented by the State; but there could be no doubt that the Hearst, McCormick and Luce publications obeyed instructions from their owners.

Mr. AZKOUL felt that the ideas in Mr. Zonov's amendment were unexceptionable in themselves; but they went beyond the scope of the draft code of ethics. In his view, the journalist's primary obligation was to seek and report the truth. Because the press wielded so great an influence in troubled times, he was prepared to recognize that journalists should refrain from propaganda which might disturb international relations, arouse discrimination, or otherwise oppose the principles of the United Nations, and would support a text in that negative form. He could not, however, accept the inclusion in the draft code of ethics of any text imposing on journalists the positive obligation of making propaganda of any kind or of combating any given ideology. No newspaperman should be a missionary, save of his own free will; all that could be required of journalists was that they should be honest reporters.

Mr. MOULIK wished to introduce an amendment which covered the same ground as Mr. Zonov's, but was phrased in a negative form. He hoped that both Mr. Azkoul and Mr. Zonov would support it. The amendment consisted in transferring article II, paragraph 4 to the end of article I and adding a new paragraph 4 to article II, reading as follows: "They shall exercise special restraint in reporting and commenting on items of information dealing with situations of tension arising from racial, religious or economic discriminations."

The meeting rose at 4.20 p.m.

18/3 p.m.